annual list of the most common causes of death in the US from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and found that medical error is the third most common cause of death.

‘Sound scientific methods, beginning with an assessment of the problem, are critical to approaching any health threat to patients,’ they write.

‘The problem of medical error should not be exempt from this scientific approach.’


**Yoga may help lessen the debilitating effects of asthma and have lifestyle benefits**

There is evidence that yoga could improve the symptoms of asthma and boost quality of life, but the effects on lung function and medication use are uncertain, new research has found.

Recent studies looked into the possibility that yoga, a popular exercise due to its lifestyle benefits, could relieve problems of the common chronic disease that affects 300 million people around the world.

A new Cochrane Review summarised randomised trials and found evidence that practising yoga might improve symptoms and quality of life. But researchers said higher-quality studies with more participants were needed before firm conclusions could be drawn.

The Cochrane team looked at 15 randomised controlled trials of 1,048 men and women. The trials were mostly conducted in India, but also carried out in Europe and the US.

Most participants had experienced mild to moderate asthma for between six months and 23 years. Six studies looked into the effects of breathing during yoga, while other studies assessed breathing, posture and meditation. Most participants continued to take asthma medication during the studies.

The researchers found moderate quality evidence from five studies that yoga reduces the impact of asthma. However, evidence about the effect practising yoga had on lung function is more uncertain.


**Video calls help prevent long-term memory loss problems after chemotherapy**

Long-term memory issues after having chemotherapy could be prevented by cognitive behavioural therapy delivered via video conferencing.

One in two cancer patients are thought to develop memory problems after chemotherapy. Although mild, the problems affect people long after cancer treatment has ended.

Robert Ferguson and his team at the Eastern Maine Medical Center and Lafayette Family Cancer Center in Maine in the US developed Memory and Attention Adaptation Training (MAAT) therapy.

The training aims to help cancer survivors become more aware of when they are likely to have memory problems, which enables them to develop skills to prevent lapses or compensate for memory dysfunction.

In a small randomised study, 47 white breast cancer survivors were given eight MAAT sessions of between 30 to 45 minutes, on average four years after they received chemotherapy. Other breast cancer survivors were given supportive talk therapy. Afterwards, participants completed questionnaires assessing their perceptions of memory problems and anxiety about their difficulties.

Over the phone they completed neuropsychological tests of verbal memory, processing speeds or the ability to perform easy cognitive tasks automatically and fluently.

Two months after MAAT ended, the videoconferencing group reported fewer problems, improved processing speeds and were less anxious about cognitive problems than those who had supportive therapy.